

2nd January 2022


The Methodist Church

South Warwickshire Circuit

Registered charity no. 1154830

Superintendent Minister: Rev Dr Iain Ballard

Dear Friends,

Greetings and Happy New year to you all. I hope you have had the best Christmas celebration possible in these pandemic influenced times. You will realise that I am writing this letter before Christmas so can take nothing for granted. The Omicron variant is spreading fast at the moment and folks are rushing to get their booster vaccinations. Though not all who are eligible will go because, for reasons beyond my understanding, some people would rather risk an unpleasant, even fatal illness than have inoculations. So, my hope is that you are warm and safe reading this in your home looking back on a pleasant time of celebration on your own or with others. COVID has forced some changes on us all some of which are actually a good thing. For example in 2020 my wife and I found the cards we had given each other for birthdays and Christmases because card shops were closed at the time we needed to buy birthday cards. Rather than buy new ones this December we are exchanging the same again and giving a bit extra to a homeless charity. Maybe Christmas 2022 we will buy carefully chosen cards and use them for a couple of years.

As I was saying earlier, it's difficult to write a new year letter some two weeks in advance when things are so unpredictable. The same was true of the first Christmas. Mary knew she would have a baby which was uniquely conceived but she had no idea where, or in what circumstance Jesus would be born. Joseph must have been beside himself finding no one willing to give in house hospitality when the birth was so imminent and, apparently, there were no women around willing to act as midwife. Then there were the unexpected visitors at the stable. Just when things might have been improving Joseph (according to one of the suggested readings for today) has a nocturnal visitor in a dream who instructs him to take Mary and Jesus and seek refuge in Egypt. Throughout history it seems violence has driven so many people to embark on perilous journeys seeking a safe place of welcome, warmth and a chance to be self-supporting in a peaceful place. His motivation is the same that drives thousands of people, sometimes across continents, in our generation to seek refuge or asylum. Tragically many of those fleeing human violence or the violence of extreme weather (floods and droughts symptomatic of climate change) are exploited by human traffickers.

What are your hopes for this new year? I'm sure that you will share my hope that the current COVID variant will not be as devastating as some fear and that any further new variants will not evade vaccine triggered antibodies. I pray also that better and humane ways of dealing with the desperate refugees who are deceived into boarding flimsy dinghies to cross the English Channel will be found by international cooperation. My hope is that as churches and individuals we can adapt to and change with the way all our lives have been disrupted by forces seen and unseen in these unpredictable days. In all this I hope we still believe "The best of all, God is with us" (John Wesley)

Rev Richard Wilde

Reminder: Dial – a – Prayer, Methodist Church

Listen to a prayer: 0808 281 2514

Listen to news:

0808 281 2478

Sunday Worship and Daily Prayers

There are plenty of opportunities to join in worship if you have the internet, eg Methodist Central Hall (London) streams worship each Sunday at 11:00 am (<https://mchw.live/>)

Circuit Service

The Circuit continues to provide a pre-recorded service each week, via YouTube, Facebook and our website – see below for details:

Please access the YouTube video by clicking the following link or typing it into your browser:

tinyurl.com/SWCplaylist

or if this doesn't work, try the long version:

<https://www.youtube.com/playlist?list=PLzyDSCOYMtQvpCroUvvxjE93MqkTWQomY>

If you regularly watch the Circuit Service, do consider subscribing to the Channel.

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/SW.Methodist/>

Website: www.methodist-swc.org.uk

A full text of this service is available on the website, and is being sent by post to all those people who do not use the Internet so they can join in too. These worship opportunities will be available and sent to you every Sunday. We will be offering worship in a similar way each Sunday as the health crisis continues.

District Messages: The Birmingham District puts out a message each week on their YouTube channel:

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC65eOm7QtM4Wu1R6jTI7frw>

or you can search on YouTube for *Birmingham Methodist District*. We also have it up on our website.

TV & radio opportunities for worship:

Radio 4, Sunday Worship, Sunday 8:10am,
Radio 4 Long Wave, Daily Service, 9.45am Mon-Fri,
Radio 3, Choral Evensong, Sunday 3pm.

BBC 1, Songs of Praise, Sunday 1:15pm

(The times of the TV services can alter, please check the times)

Daily prayers at 10am are led by members of the circuit via zoom <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/328494818> - all zoom meetings are now protected by password – please contact Michael Sharman (see below) for the password.

All members of the Circuit are invited to join, **you do not need a zoom account to join**. You can also join by **telephone**. Please contact Michael Sharman on 07412 401988 if you'd like help getting in.

Pastoral Support

A reminder that if you are in pastoral need of any kind please contact your own Minister direct by email or phone. We may also be able to arrange practical help with shopping and so on. Our details are below.

If in any doubt, please contact Rev Dr Iain Ballard and he will link you up with help locally to you.

Rev Dr Iain Ballard <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	07368 875790	iain.ballard@methodist.org.uk
Rev Sally Jones <i>(Day off – Monday; Study day – Friday)</i>	01926 740846	sally.jones@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Jeongsook Kim <i>(Day off – Tuesday)</i>	01926 426084	revjeongsook@gmail.com
Rev. Audrey Simpson <i>(Day off – Friday)</i>	<i>Rev Audrey is on Sabbatical</i>	
Rev. Jemima Strain <i>(Part-time)</i>	07969 345389	jemima.strain@methodist.org.uk
Rev. Richard Wilde <i>(Part-time)</i>	07971 218356	revrichardwilde@gmail.com ,

Keep safe. Keep caring. Keep praying. With every blessing to you and yours.

The Ministers and Stewards of the South Warwickshire Methodist Circuit of Churches